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Status Markers in Moche Iconography

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The reconstruction of the views of a society that has left behind no written testimony is always difficult. However, in the case of the Moche culture, which flourished on the north coast of Peru in the first eight centuries CE, this task is easier to achieve as we have, from year to year, an increasing number of archaeological sources originating from methodically conducted excavations and exceptionally rich iconographic material, obtained in earlier decades and stored today in public and private collections all over the world. This material primarily comprises thousands of representations recorded mainly on ceramic artifacts: handmade and press-molded figurines and vessels, decorated two- and three-dimensionally. Unfortunately, most of the material gathered in museums comes from the looting of archaeological sites, so the exact context in which individual artifacts were found is usually unknown.

The nature of Moche art and the main objectives it had to achieve are still under discussion, but it can be assumed that it was both one of the most important media used for conveying the content of the religion that gained particular popularity and many followers in the first millennium CE (Quilter 2002) and, simultaneously, the official language of the elite that promoted this religion, building its own social, economic, and political prestige on its basis (Bawden 1995, 1996). The pottery created in the coastal workshops was among the most important of the luxury goods and was widely distributed throughout a large area that was subject to Moche influence. As an important status symbol and a valued export commodity, it also enabled the local elites to build their prestige in areas that came under the influence of this

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culture relatively late (Chapdelaine 2008). This art was meant to carry an important ideological message, and to do so it had to use a system of legible symbols that could be understood by its entire audience. This system was used by Moche artists not only to express the religious content (e.g., the mythical narrative or the description of the course and significance of rituals) but also to provide information on the complex social reality of the world around them, the complicated structure of interconnections and hierarchical dependencies of groups and individuals.[1] In spite of the extremely rich material we currently have at our disposal, the reconstruction of the system is not at all straightforward.

Clothing and headgear, all kinds of ornaments, their shapes and the materials from which they were made, as well as many other elements modifying—and sometimes completely changing—the appearance of the person can and usually do fulfill (not only in traditional cultures) an important classification function (Iwaniszewski, this volume). Particular differentiating elements, which may be applied individually or in combination with others, can change the appearance of the people who use them, both for a certain time and permanently. These markings emphasize the similarities and highlight the differences between the members of a given community, who are usually treated as representatives of smaller or larger groups that constitute it. Membership in specific groups and the right to use particular types of markings can be related, for example, to the census of age or property, origin, religion, degree of initiation into a given structure or organization, personal achievements, or skills acquired in a lifetime. These various types of attributes of a cultural nature, assigned to an individual to emphasize his or her social position, can be named status markers or status indicators. All markings of this type functioning in a given culture jointly form a complex system of symbols with the help of which a great deal of important information can be encoded.

The function the status markers play in the process of identifying various social roles held by individuals, especially in highly stratified and hierarchical societies, is not to be underestimated. Familiarity with the rules of using various attributes and knowing their symbolic meaning, as well as the ability to correctly recognize them, are among the most important skills of a member of any community. This knowledge—gained in the process of socialization—means that an individual is not only able to better organize his or her relationships with other members of the community but also to properly shape (in the person's own eyes and in the eyes of his or her countrymen) his or her own image and that of the territorial, ethnic, family, religious, or occupational group to which the person belongs. Thanks to this knowledge, the individual can also clearly distinguish herself or himself from all types of others or strangers. The general rules of the functioning of such systems of status markers are usually known to all members of a given society (or at least to

the vast majority of them), but certain details or nuances of their use may only be understood by a select few.

Let me illustrate this by referring to an example that is relatively close to our times and culture. It is not difficult for us to identify the two men depicted on a nineteenth-century drawing at a general level (figure 10.1). Their place in the structure of society is indicated by easily recognizable status markers with which they are portrayed: uniforms, headgear, and weapons. They are soldiers. Fundamentally, any observer without any specific qualifications can say this much about them. However, if we had greater knowledge (of this era, of Napoleon's army to which both soldiers belonged, as well as of the system of military markings that applied at that time), this general identification would be just the beginning of the description we would be able to create by "reading" or "decoding" the individual symbols. Successive items of the two men's attire (e.g., the colors of the uniforms and epaulettes and of the hackles on shakos; the types of emblems, medals, or ribbon bars; the forms of rank insignia on their uniforms) would be marks we understand, which could specify not only their ranks and the types of formations to which they belonged but probably also the course of their military careers and nationality.[2] Knowing the precise history of this period and the history of the individual units of the Grande Armée, we could perhaps even be able to create some narrative on the basis of the representation and our knowledge. We could, for instance, determine the approximate time and place of the meeting of the two soldiers, try to characterize their relationship, or describe further vicissitudes of their lives. The description we create and the narrative would obviously apply not to any specific characters but to typical, average representatives of both formations. This is because, although we could say quite a lot about them, they would remain anonymous to us (in the sense of unknown forenames and surnames). After all, everything points to the fact that the intention of the artist who painted this picture was not to create portraits of real existing soldiers but only depictions of representatives of two specific military units.

The complex system of status markers, which can be seen in the representations of people shown in Moche iconography, has stirred interest among researchers of the pre-Columbian cultures of Peru almost from the moment when the first artifacts of this culture found their way into their hands at the end of the nineteenth century. Scholars (including Montell 1929; Varcárcel 1936, 1937, 1938; Larco Hoyle 1938, 1939) usually noted the details of the appearance of similarly rendered representatives of specific groups (e.g., warriors, participants in ritual runs, musicians, women) that were depicted in both sculpture and paintings, sometimes in very complex scenes created in the fine-line painting technique. However, the first attempt to holistically research this system of markings was made in the mid-1970s by Anne Marie Hoquenghem (1973). The typology presented in her doctoral thesis

Figure 10.1. French grenadier and voltigeur of 1808. Lithography by Joseph Louis Hippolyte Bellangé.

was, unfortunately, incomplete and the code she proposed, which was supposed to serve the purpose of describing individual attributes, was never used afterward (the author did not even use it in her subsequent publications). The problem of the exceptional variety of the status markers that are present in Moche iconography was also taken up later (inter alia, Benson 1975, 1976, 1982, 1984, 1988; Berezkin 1978; Cordy-Collins 2001; Schuler-Schömig 1979, 1981).

Thanks to professional excavation research conducted on the north coast of Peru for over a hundred years—especially intensively during the three decades that have passed since the discovery of the royal tombs at the Sipán site in the Lambayeque Valley—many status markers, which were previously known only from iconography, were correctly identified in archaeological material and written up (inter alia, Alva and Donnan 1993; Donnan 2007; Mujica Barreda 2007; Uceda Castillo 2008). It was possible to specify the actual shapes and sizes of the individual elements of outfits, headgear, and ornaments, as well as weapons and items used in rituals or in everyday life; it was also possible to determine the materials from which they were made, as well as examine the ways some of them were used. Despite these undoubted successes, many of the details of the system in question still give rise to controversies or constitute riddles for researchers.

Therefore, despite decades of study, the system of status markers used in Moche culture is still only partially recognized. A large proportion of its elements requires more precise studies intended to give a better understanding of both the symbolism of the individual markings and the detailed principles of their application. The latest iconographic studies, which contributed significantly to the progress on this path, include, among others, a doctoral thesis dedicated to gender markers that were used in this culture (Scher 2010) and my earlier publications in which various status markers applied on so-called portrait vessels were analyzed (Wołoszyn 2008a, 2008b). The elaborate typologies of indicators I presented served the purpose of distinguishing the images of representatives of various social and ritual groups on a sample of vessels I used in my analysis (totaling 778 specimens). In addition, in my most recent previous work (Wołoszyn 2014) I studied status markers enabling the recognition in Moche art of the representations of foreigners—representatives of the Recuay culture or Recuay-related groups.[3] I have summarized below the results of these works and have tried to reconstruct as complete a record as possible of the artistic measures and iconographic elements that constitute clear symbols depicting the social position of the individual and his or her prestige and group membership in the art of a society that did not use writing.

To begin with, I emphasize that the system of markings used in Moche art was applied especially to male characters, who were presented in the art much more frequently than women and in a much more diverse manner. It was used—with various levels of detail—both in ceramic depictions rendered in three-dimensional form (including figurines, portrait vessels, full-figured vessels) and in two-dimensional scenes produced using the fine-line painting technique. In the former, a lot of details could be presented because of the relatively large scale of the representations. They were not only details of the outfits or decorations but also, quite often, of the physical features of individuals. In contrast, only the most important traits could be

presented using the fine-line painting technique in which the depicted figures were generally small (usually no larger than a few centimeters). The system was obviously also applied in the production of figural depictions from other materials that were used decidedly less frequently than ceramics, such as metal, wood, stone, and others. The largest representations of human characters in Moche art, in which this system was also applied, were made in the form of polychrome bas-relief murals decorating the walls of temples. Representations of this type were discovered in such sites as Huaca de la Luna in the Moche Valley, Huaca el Brujo in the Chicama Valley, and Pañamarca in the Nepeña Valley. They primarily presented warriors, captives, and priests.

The register of the various markers used in Moche iconography was very elaborate. Certain categories of indicators consisted of just a few types (e.g., nose ornaments), but there were also those that included dozens or even hundreds of varieties (e.g., headgear). This system was supposed to reflect the extremely complex social structure, which is also suggested by the exceptionally diverse burial patterns identified in Moche culture (Donnan 1995; Millaire 2002).

RELATIVE SIZE AND POSITION IN THE SCENE

Especially in fine-line painting scenes, the higher or lower social status of individual characters could be expressed by the relative size of their figures and their positions in the scene (Donnan 1978, 34). Individuals of a higher status could be depicted as being larger (sometimes much larger) than the others and could be distinguished by being shown in the center (or in another special place) of the presentation; they were seated while the others stood or knelt, and they could be presented as sitting on a low throne or standing on a podium, platform, or pyramid. However, there can be exceptions, especially to the first of these rules: the differences in the relative sizes of the characters can, in fact, sometimes symbolize the perspective or be caused by technical problems (the layout of the scene had to take into account the limited surface of the vessel's body). Typical examples of the application of these two artistic measures include a deer hunting scene (figure 10.2) and a dance scene (figure 10.3) presented here, in which a person from the highest elite of the Moche—probably the chief—is depicted particularly clearly (Wołoszyn 2008b).

HEADGEAR

Doubtless, the most distinctive and simultaneously one of the most internally diverse categories of status markers in Moche iconography was headgear. As many researchers (including Bawden 1996, 123–126; Donnan 1978, 73) have noted,

Figure 10.2. Deer hunting scene (Donnan 1978, 179, fig. 262). Drawing by Janusz Z. Wołoszyn.

Figure 10.3. Ritual dance scene (Donnan and McClelland 1999, 101, fig. 4.49). Drawing by Janusz Z. Wołoszyn.

headgear was probably the most important indicator of the social status or ritual function of the individual presented. In fine-line painting scenes, in which (if only because of the small scale of such representations) many presumably less important elements were ignored, headgear was always depicted with great precision and attention to detail. It cannot be ruled out that the individual members of Moche society (particularly representatives of the elite) could have used various types of headgear, depending on the circumstances. As many as up to a dozen or so different types of headgear accompanying one individual were found in the richest Moche tombs known to us.[4]

Headgear, which we know mainly from Moche iconography (rarely from excavated materials), could be produced with only one or more pieces of fabric (figure

10.4); but ornaments made of braided plant fibers, metal, feathers, bird wings, or animal skins (figure 10.5) were sometimes added (Donnan 2004, 42–75). Some headgear had depictions of birds of prey, felines, or monkeys. Trophies (or their images made of other materials), such as human hands, forearms, and heads, were attached to the headgear that can be attributed to the representatives of the Recuay culture.

In the collection of portrait vessels I analyzed, approximately 70 percent represented characters using some type of headgear. Their diversity was extremely great because in just this sample (comprising, as mentioned, close to 800 specimens) it was possible to distinguish over 100 types and subtypes of headdress (some were presented multiple times in the same form, others only on a few vessels; there were also frequent cases of headgear that were unique and could only be seen on one vessel). The headgear presented in Moche iconography included various types: those made of headscarves, broader or narrower tapes, tied or not tied under the chin, helmets, circlets, bonnets, pillbox hats, and many others. Only some of them were represented on portrait vessels (Wołoszyn 2008a, 78–122). A more detailed analysis of the painted and full-figure depictions would almost certainly bring at least a few dozen additional types.

HAIRSTYLE AND FACIAL HAIR

Headgear (or its lack) seems to be the most important element expressing the status of a given individual in Moche iconography. Earlier studies made it possible to conclude that only representatives of some groups could be presented with no headgear. These groups were probably marginalized to some extent because of their lower position in the social hierarchy (women, children, certain representatives of the Recuay culture, and captives). For the latter, the loss of headgear in battle was the first and most important announcement of defeat, the beginning of the end. Free men, full members of the community (namely warriors and participants in various rituals) who were, as mentioned above, the main subjects of interest to the Moche artists, always appeared in some headdress, even in scenes with sexual content depicted on so-called erotic vessels (Wołoszyn 2008a, 171–208).

In the collection of portrait vessels I analyzed, approximately 30 percent of the specimens showed individuals without headgear. Also, in painted scenes and on full-figure vessels, men with uncovered heads were presented far less frequently. Most of the three-dimensional depictions of people without headgear present their hairstyles in a clear and easy to classify manner. The situation is decidedly worse in the case of painted representations, which mainly show different forms of arrangement of the hair in a much more schematic way. The repertoire of hairstyles represented

Figure 10.4. Portrait vessel representing a Moche priest. His headgear is made of only a few pieces of fabric (Inv. no. ML000230; *courtesy*, Larco Museum, Lima, Peru). Photograph by Janusz Z. Wołoszyn.

Figure 10.5. Foreign "salesman" with a feline in his hands. The man wears a headgear of animal skin, a necklace made of elongated beads, and pendant crescent earrings. His hair is arranged in a form of a ponytail (Inv. no. VA 48046; *courtesy*, Ethnological Museum, Berlin, Germany). Photograph by Janusz Z. Wołoszyn.

Figure 10.6. Hairstyle typical of women. Type F-IV-c (according to Wołoszyn 2008a, 126; Inv. no. VA 18059; *courtesy*, Ethnological Museum, Berlin, Germany). Photograph by Janusz Z. Wołoszyn.

Figure 10.7. Hairstyle (type F-V-a according to Wołoszyn 2008a, 126) and facial hair typical of Recuay men (Inv. no. ML000214; *courtesy*, Larco Museum, Lima, Peru). Photograph by Janusz Z. Wołoszyn.

in iconography was relatively small (encompassing approximately twenty types), but the styles also played an important identification role. It was possible to distinguish hairstyles that were typical of women (their most important elements were plaits; in addition, the women's long hair mostly covered their ears; figure 10.6), captives (their hair was generally short or of medium length, and their ears—often with clearly marked holes after the removal of their ear ornaments—were exposed; see figures 10.10 and 10.11), and foreigners (namely, representatives of the Recuay culture; figures 10.5 and 10.7). The hairstyles of the last of these groups were clearly of interest to Moche artists. Foreigners could have their hair tied into one or two ponytails or have a tonsure-like haircut, but the most characteristic form of their hairstyle was a wedge-shaped forelock (Scher 2010; Wołoszyn 2014, 279–281). In addition, only they could be portrayed with facial hair, that is, a moustache and beards of various lengths. The type of hairstyles and facial hair in Moche iconography was not only a gender but also an ethnic marker.

DEFORMATIONS OF THE BODY: INTENTIONAL MUTILATIONS

The vessels showing men without legs, with lips and noses cut off, as well as blind or with one eye have given rise to doubts as to interpretation for over a century. They caught the attention of researchers—mainly physicians, less frequently archaeologists—very early, at the beginning of the twentieth century, and they were interpreted either as representations of the sick (e.g., suffering from leishmaniosis) and disabled or as likenesses of the so-called *mutilados*, namely, intentionally maimed individuals (d'Harcourt 1939; Larco Hoyle 1939; Lastres et al. 1943; Palma 1912; Vélez López 1912; Weiss Harvey 1961). In the case of this latter interpretation, it was sometimes suggested—which is completely unjustified and not confirmed in any iconographic material—that various types of maiming were forms of punishment for unspecified crimes. Such individuals were described as *mutilados por castigo*, or people maimed as punishment.[5]

Approximately 5 percent of the portrait vessels I studied showed representations of individuals with mutilated faces (without a nose, nose and upper lip, or nose and both lips), while about 4 percent had images of blind and one-eyed individuals (Wołoszyn 2008a, 153–156). The analysis showed that all of the images of maimed and disabled individuals presented in Moche art (it should be emphasized again that they were only males) can be related to just a few groups of characters. In the case of portrait vessels, they were mainly so-called group C priests (figure 10.8). This could mean that various kinds of afflictions were assigned the significance of symbols of predestination to perform specific social or ritual functions. A physical defect—marked very clearly in iconography—could play the role of a status marker in these depictions.

PAINTING, TATTOOING, AND SCARIFICATION OF THE FACE AND BODY

As can be presumed on the basis of the preserved iconographic representations, the exceptionally diverse, permanent, and temporary decoration of the face (figure 10.9) and body (figures 10.10 and 10.11) was a very common practice in Moche culture. No doubt, decorations of this type can be considered one of the most interesting subsystems of status markers recognized there, which would require a more detailed study in the future. In the collection of portrait vessels I analyzed, more than half of the individuals bore traces of one or more techniques of skin decoration (Wołoszyn 2008a, 141–152, 266–293). To develop an easy-to-use typology of markings of this kind, I broke the complex designs down into individual elements, so-called ornamental motifs, which received alphanumeric markings (there are several hundred of them). As can be presumed, even the most intricate tattoos and paintings were composed by the Moche using motifs of this type (obviously, not necessarily identical

Figure 10.8. Mutilated group C priest (Inv. no. ML001415; *courtesy*, Larco Museum, Lima, Peru). Photograph by Janusz Z. Wołoszyn.

to those highlighted by me). Apart from the painted and engraved patterns that are repeated relatively frequently, we also sometimes encounter designs of a completely unique nature (namely, they only appear on individual vessels). Painted and engraved marks (equally numerous, although obviously—because of the small scale of the representations—not so accurate) are found on the faces and bodies of individuals presented in the form of full-figured vessels and in fine-line painting scenes (I managed to distinguish about ninety different designs of facial decoration in the published scenes).

NOSE, EAR, AND LIP ORNAMENTS AND NECKLACES

Nose, ear, and lip ornaments were further types of status markers that required some permanent body modifications (perforation of the auricle, the nasal septum, or the skin under the lower lip). As for ear ornaments, several types of earrings, tubular earplugs (of varied lengths and diameters), and earspools (often very richly decorated) were used. These ornaments were worn in pairs. Usually,

Figure 10.9. Mutilated character with decorated (probably tattooed) face skin (Inv. no. ML000413; *courtesy*, Larco Museum, Lima, Peru). Photograph by Janusz Z. Wołoszyn.

one pair was used, although in the case of wire-and-drop circle earrings it was possible to use one, two, or three pairs simultaneously. Some types of decorations could be combined with each other (e.g., earrings and tubular earplugs), which, in turn, gave a dozen or so different patterns of use of ear ornaments. In addition, their symbolic value as status markers was almost certainly defined by their size, type of material from which they were made, and the decorations presented on them (this could be a painted design, additional moving elements, or inlay made of shells or semi-precious stones showing geometric patterns, animals, or anthropomorphic figures). In the collection of portrait vessels I studied, ear ornaments appeared in more than 40 percent of the representations (Wołoszyn 2008a, 128–135, 260–263). In addition, approximately 10 percent of the individuals (mostly captives) were presented with clearly marked traces of missing ornaments (large holes in the ear lobe after the removal of earplugs or earspools; figure 10.10). This type of treatment could be defined as a marker of a loss of status (lower status, loss of dignity, degradation).

Figure 10.10. Deck figure of a tattooed captive with a typical hairstyle and clearly marked traces of missing ear ornaments (Inv. no. ML002041; *courtesy*, Larco Museum, Lima, Peru). Photograph by Janusz Z. Wołoszyn.

The depictions of characters with nose ornaments constituted only about 6 percent of the collection of portrait vessels analyzed (Wołoszyn 2008a, 135–139, 264). Compared with the extensive excavated material containing numerous, sometimes very richly decorated varieties, in iconography we find a surprisingly small variety of such ornaments (figure 10.11). Nose pieces were primarily made of metal, usually gold or silver sheet. Production was normally restricted to a handful of basic forms—circular, rectangular, and crescent ornaments. They could be decorated with representations of plants, animals, or anthropomorphic figures, with inlays of semi-precious stones or shells. Based on the available comparative data, we can presume that nose ornaments were only used by males. Interestingly, representatives of the Recuay culture were never depicted wearing them.

Decorations of the lower lip (labrets) were very rarely presented in Moche iconography. It seems that they only appeared on figurines and vessels from the Moche V phase, depicting foreign women perhaps from the northern Piura-Chira region, the additional features of whom were characteristic hairstyles and cranial deformations resulting in a heart-shaped head (Cordy-Collins 2001).

In the analyzed sample of portrait vessels, only 3 percent of the characters were presented with necklaces. In the case of three-dimensional full-figure depictions,

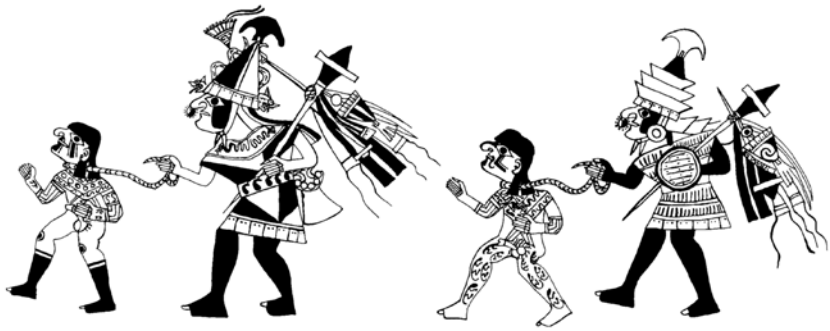

Figure 10.11. Warriors with circular nose ornaments leading naked and tattooed captives from the battlefield (Donnan and McClelland 1999, 130, fig. 4.100). Drawing by Janusz Z. Wołoszyn.

this percentage is probably slightly higher, whereas in fine-line painting scenes, necklaces are very rarely presented (see figure 10.5). Just as in the case of nose ornaments, in the case of necklaces, major differences can be observed between the types depicted in iconography (there are only a few simple types) and the frequently exceptionally magnificent specimens known from excavated material. Both men and women could wear necklaces. Some of their types were characteristic of the representatives of the Recuay culture (necklaces made of elongated beads), while others (made of large round beads, not decorated or in the shape of an owl's head) adorned the necks of members of the elite (see figure 10.3).

ATTIRE AND OUTFIT

As pointed out above, the most important status marker in Moche iconography was headgear. With a few exceptions, the remaining elements of the outfit—those made of fabric—were not especially distinctive. Both women and men (especially priests) wore short- or long-sleeved tunics of various lengths (Makowski 1994). In the case of women, the tunic was often tied with a belt. A shawl or a kind of mantle could be worn on top of it (among foreigners, hooded mantles were typical). These elements of the outfit could be undecorated (monochrome) or decorated with geometric or zoomorphic ornaments. Some of these ornaments almost certainly played the role of status markers or even ethnic markers (e.g., a chessboard motif was typical of foreigners), but the determination of their exact significance requires further research.

The fundamental element of the male outfit was undoubtedly the loincloth (figure 10.12). It was sometimes the only element of the outfit (in the case of

Figure 10.12. Recuay hunters wearing loincloths (Donnan and McClelland 1999, 122, fig. 4.88). Drawing by Janusz Z. Wołoszyn.

Recuay men) or the only element in addition to headgear (in the case of Moche men). Interestingly, the loincloth was removed extremely rarely; practically all of the so-called erotic vessels depicting scenes of sexual relations show men wearing both loincloths and headgear. In Moche iconography, the only completely naked men were captives or people killed and left on the battlefield (see figures 10.10 and 10.11).

Certainly, the most varied costumes were those of the warriors. They consisted of two elements: short-sleeved shirts and knee-length kilts (see figures 10.3 and 10.11). What made these garments original were their decorations. As can be seen from the iconography, the fabrics from which they were made could be ornamented in various ways and, in certain cases, decorated with rectangular or circular badges sewn onto them. Supplements to the outfits of Moche warriors were magnificent pectorals placed on their shoulders, while foreigners had so-called yokes with rectangular fringes (Lau 2004). The former were usually decorated with tiny beads made of shells, semi-precious stones, or metals; the latter were sometimes decorated with metal disks.

The most characteristic and distinctive elements of the outfits of foreign women were shoulder nail-head shawl pins (called *ticpis*). They played both a practical role (they were used for strapping the tunic on the shoulders) and an ornamental role (they were made of metal and worn in pairs). In Moche iconography, they were simultaneously clear gender and ethnic markers of female mountain dwellers (figure 10.13). Moche women did not use pins at all, probably because their tunics were of a different cut (Scher 2010, 198–199).

Figure 10.13. Depiction of a Recuay woman using *ticpis* pins (Inv. no. ML001347; *courtesy*, Larco Museum, Lima, Peru).

WEAPONS, TOOLS, MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS, AND OTHER OBJECTS

The position of the representatives of individual groups in the social hierarchy could also be evidenced by the objects with which they were presented in the iconography. In the case of warriors, they could be various types of weapons, small decorated shields, or coxal protectors. For priests or religious practitioners (men and women), they could be various types of ceramic vessels, musical instruments, or scepter knives (rattle-chisels or spatulas), which they held in their hands. In the case of foreigners—the so-called salesmen (Benson 1976)—they could be patterned fabrics, conch shell trumpets, or strings of *espingo* seeds or *ulluchu* fruits. The utensils used in coca rituals (i.e., coca bags, lime containers, and lime sticks) should be considered clear status and ethnic markers of foreign men. The represented person could simply have these objects with him or her, keep them in his or her hands, or handle them. It can be assumed that the performance of certain operations (just like using specific tools) could also have been reserved for representatives of specific groups. Specific behavior, sequences of movements, and gestures—related to these activities and sometimes appearing clearly in iconography—could also have constituted a form of message regarding a social or ritual position of the individuals performing them.

Figure 10.14. Member of the Moche elite with a tamed feline (Inv. no. ML000639; *courtesy*, Larco Museum, Lima, Peru).

ANIMALS

Wild, tamed, or domesticated animals presented together with people may also be a special type of status indicator. One of the most interesting ways of emphasizing the high social position of a member of the Moche elite was to present him seated on his podium with his hand resting on the back of a tamed feline kept on a leash (figure 10.14). Another privilege and monopoly of the upper classes was participation in the deer hunts mentioned above, sometimes with the use of dogs (Donnan 1997). The men taking part in the hunts were sometimes dressed exceptionally glamorously. In contrast, the men hunting for sea lions or birds—decidedly less frequently presented in iconography—were not. Foreigners were sometimes represented in the company of Andean camelids and the so-called salesmen mentioned in the previous section, with birds, monkeys, or felines most likely brought from the Amazon rainforest.

CONCLUSIONS

The system of status markers used in Moche iconography was developed in the first centuries CE and was used throughout the period of development of that culture. It

seems that it played a special role in phases III and IV, from which the most differentiated representations using a large number of details originate. This system, as I have tried to show using the examples cited in this chapter, made use of a precise language of understandable signs that could specify the social, ritual, cultural, or ethnic group to which the human characters depicted belonged. To a large extent, in order to be understood, this system had to refer to various elements of the real Moche world (both natural and primarily cultural). Artists used these elements to create an ideological message about the prevailing order of things, the applicable rules, the social structure in place, and the like. However, some elements of this system were probably invented in a way, "designed" only to create a clear and internally coherent visual message. By comparing individual representations (both two- and three-dimensional), it can be concluded that the individual Moche artists complied with the rules of that language of signs to varying degrees. Some used the language with lesser skill and others with greater proficiency. It will be interesting to see the extent to which we manage to decode it, understand it, and then use it in further research into Moche culture.

NOTES

1. In this chapter I do not deal with the case of the intriguing intentional markings that can be found on Lima beans (both real ones and especially those represented in Moche art). A discussion of these markings was started by Rafael Larco Hoyle (1942, 1944), who described and interpreted them as alleged writing symbols. Information and a comprehensive list of publications on this topic can be found in an article by Tomi S. Melka (2010). Melka (2010, 89) writes: "A range of accounts has been offered as to what the real meaning of these items [decorated Moche Lima beans] is: starting from a recreational and/or a gambling game, to a divination scheme, to amulets, to an application for determining the length and order of funerary rites, to a device close to an accountancy and data storage medium, ending up with an 'ideographic' or even a 'pre-alphabetic' system." The question of the use of Moche art as a symbolic form of communication and of interpreting it as some kind of visual language was dealt with in the PhD thesis and publications by Margaret A. Jackson (2008, 2011).

2. In addition to Frenchmen, Napoleon's multiethnic army also consisted of troops from allied countries and countries annexed to France.

3. Recuay culture developed in the mountainous area next to the Southern Moche Region, and its representatives maintained close contacts of various kinds with Moche society.

4. The tomb of the so-called Warrior-Priest of Huaca de la Cruz in the Virú Valley contained at least three different types of headgear (Strong and Evans 1952, 150–166; Mogrovejo Rosales 1995), while Tomb 2 of Dos Cabezas in the Jequetepeque Valley has as many as eighteen types (Donnan 2007).

5. Intentional mutilations of the body have been practiced in many cultures of the Old and New Worlds. They had very diverse forms and were performed for a variety of reasons. The most important types of mutilation include mutilation associated with initiation, castration, mutilations and deformations that are a sign of membership in a tribe, caste, or group, ritual and magical injuries, mutilation performed as punishment, and self-mutilation (typology according to Promińska 1993).

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